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RESIST

Newsletter #178

A call to resist illegitimate authority

September 1985

Report From El Salvador

KEN TANGVIK

Last June, while thousands of "pledge" signers were being arrested after a contra-aid vote, a delegation of 29 U.S. educators and unionists, including myself, were in San Salvador attending the 19th assembly of ANDES, the national teachers association in El Salvador. ANDES, one of the leading progressive forces in El Salvador, has played a very important historical role in the development of the popular movement and has also been severely repressed by the government. Since 1979, 322 teachers have been killed, 150 have disappeared and thousands have been exiled because of threats on their lives.

Because of the continuing repression against ANDES, one of our purposes in going to El Salvador was to be part of a broad international shield for the group that would permit them to safely hold their assembly, without any interference from the military, government, or death squads. Our other purpose was to attempt to gather information and documentation concerning the human rights situation, the war and the labor movement since the U.S. media was barely covering El Salvador and because the solidarity movement in the U.S. was almost exclusively focusing on Nicaragua at the time.

Compiling information is a very difficult task in El Salvador. The population, for the most part, remains in a state of terror and only the fearless and



Mothers of the Disappeared display documentation of ongoing repression in El Salvador

courageous dare to speak out openly against the government. Also, there has been virtually no opposition press since 1980 when *La Cronica* was closed after its editor was hacked to death and when *El Independiente* closed after its building was surrounded by army tanks. However, we found many Salvadoran campesinos, refugees, unionists, teachers, and students who were willing to provide valuable information and analysis.

Bombings in the Countryside Continue

Some of the most compelling documentation that we obtained was from refugees at the Domas Maria

Camp which is administered by the Catholic Church in San Salvador. There, campesinos who had recently fled from the Guazapa region told us of the massive bombings in their villages. One woman, whose husband had recently disappeared, held her 3 children in her arms as she related her experiences. She said that during the last few months helicopters and planes would fly over her village daily, dropping bombs and firing machine guns, making it impossible to work in the fields. Many children and elderly campesinos had been killed. After months of bombing, ground troops

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came in destroying and burning cattle, crops and houses. She said that some people tried to run away but they were massacred. She was kidnapped by the armed forces and put in a large building with many other people for several days until finally the International Red Cross found them and took them to the camp in San Salvador. She had no idea if she would ever see her husband again. Several other peasants had similar horror stories and almost all of them had had family members killed or disappeared. They all expressed a profound love of the land and a desire to return to the countryside rather than live in the crowded, wretched conditions of the refugee camps.

In a March 1985 report, America's Watch, the highly respected New York-based human rights organization, reported:

"Thousands of non-combatants are being killed in indiscriminate attacks by bombardment in the air, shelling and ground sweeps. Thousands more are being wounded. As best we can determine these attacks on civilian noncombatants in conflict zones are part of a deliberate policy . . . to force the civilians to flee . . . depriving the guerrillas of a civilian population. The cost of pursuing this policy in terms of human suffering is beyond measurement . . . the government of El Salvador may be fairly charged with committing war crimes because it is employing terror tactics against the civilian population."

Even the conservative Archbishop of San Salvador, Arturo Rivera y Damas has condemned the government bombings and forced relocation of peasants.

Recent statements made by Salvadoran Colonel Sigfrido Ochoa confirm that the military has defined free fire zones which are to be bombed systematically despite the fact that they are inhabited by civilians. It is clear that Duarte's strict rules about aerial bombardment are merely a public relations gimmick.

Currently over 1/5 of the Salvadoran population of 5 million are refugees, a higher percentage than the corresponding figure in South Vietnam at the height of the war. According to America's Watch, "the great majority of the half million or so internally displaced persons in El Salvador fled their homes . . . principally to avoid indiscriminate attacks by the Salvador-

an armed forces in guerrilla-controlled zones."

Alexander Cockburn, writing in *The Nation* last June, asked, "How is it that over the past two years the U.S. has been organizing, supplying, overseeing and in many cases actually executing the heaviest bombing and most ferocious aerial war ever seen in the Americas and not one coherent report of the extent, viciousness or consequences of this campaign has appeared in any major U.S. newspaper or magazine?" It seems that the U.S. media has allowed Duarte, as they have allowed President Reagan, to keep his glowing image while directly supporting murder and terror on a massive scale.

Salvadoran Society: Deterioration and Unrest

While Duarte, directed by the U.S., continues his scorched-earth policies in the countryside, he is facing a renewed popular movement in the capital led by unionists, teachers, and students that is providing a serious political challenge. One of the main reasons for the resurgence of the popular movement is that Duarte has been powerless in fulfilling his campaign of economic and social reforms. A prominent Salvadoran scholar explained to us: "In 1980 the people were so terrorized that terror took over desperation and the popular organizations were destroyed, but now desperation is replacing terror and once again the people are going to the streets."

Indeed, the economic situation in El Salvador has become more desperate in the last year. Because a large majority of the national budget goes to the war effort and Duarte is forced to make concessions to the private sector, which is still controlled by the oligarchy, most social and economic reforms have not materialized and for the vast majority of the population living conditions have worsened. After meeting with dozens of labor leaders, it became clear to us that Salvadoran workers view the Duarte government with increasing cynicism and hostility that will only lead to more confrontation.

At the ANDES teachers assembly we learned that in spite of the alleged tens of millions of dollars in education funds provided by the U.S., the situation for Salvadoran teachers and students is appalling. According to

ANDES, 5,000 qualified teachers in El Salvador are unemployed and the military has occupied or destroyed over 2,000 schools in recent years. The salaries of approximately 8,000 teachers have not been paid since February '85 and on the average, the current salary scarcely covers 40% of the teachers' basic necessities. Minimal instructional materials are not being distributed and schools are not being maintained. Several visits to schools in the capital by our delegation confirmed the statements at the convention.

The determination and courage of the teachers we met at the convention was almost beyond belief. It was not uncommon for teachers who had been victims of assassination attempts and torture to roll up their shirts or pants to show us scars and holes on their bodies. While many of their compañeros have fallen during the previous five years, these teachers are the survivors. Somewhere, somehow, they find the inspiration and compassion to continue to organize in the face of ongoing threats and intimidation.

Members of ANDES informed us that they and their students were being forced to participate in a Hitler-like Patriotic Youth Movement, a project designed by the armed forces to obligate youth to prepare for war. The National University, which was closed in 1980 after the military inflicted \$15

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Putting Women Back into the Abortion Debate

ELLEN WILLIS

Some years ago I attended a New York Institute for the Humanities seminar on the new right. We were a fairly heterogeneous group of liberals and lefties, feminists and gay activists, but on one point nearly all of us agreed: the right-to-life movement was a dangerous antifeminist crusade. At one session I argued that the attack on abortion had significance far beyond itself, that it was the linchpin of the right's social agenda. I got a lot of supporting comments and approving nods. It was too much for Peter Steinfelds, a liberal Catholic, author of *The Neoconservatives*, and executive editor of *Commonweal*. Right-to-lifers were not all right-wing fanatics, he protested. "You have to understand," he said plaintively, "that many of us see abortion as a human life issue." What I remember best was his air of frustrated isolation. I don't think he came back to the seminar after that.

Things are different now. I often feel isolated when I insist that abortion is, above all, a feminist issue. Once people took for granted that abortion was an issue of sexual politics and morality. Now, abortion is most often discussed as a question of "life" in the abstract. Public concern over abortion centers almost exclusively on fetuses; women and their bodies are merely the stage on which the drama of fetal life and death takes place. Debate over abortion — if not its reality — has become sexlessly scholastic. And the people most responsible for this turn of events are, like Peter Steinfelds, on the left.

The left wing of the right-to-life movement is a small, seemingly eccentric minority in both "progressive" and antiabortion camps. Yet it has played a critical role in the movement: by arguing that opposition to abortion can be separated from the right's antifeminist program, it has given antiabortion sentiment legitimacy in left-symp and (putatively) profeminist circles. While left antiabortionists are



hardly alone in emphasizing fetal life, their innovation has been to claim that a consistent "prolife" stand involves opposing capital punishment, supporting disarmament, demanding government programs to end poverty, and so on. This is of course a leap the right is neither able nor willing to make. It's been liberals — Gary Wills to the Catholic bishops — who have supplied the mass media with the idea that prohibiting abortion is part of a "seamless garment" of respect for human life.

Having invented this counter-context for the abortion controversy, left antiabortionists are trying to impose it as the only legitimate context for debate. Those of us who won't accept their terms and persist in seeing opposition to abortion, antifeminism, sexual repression, and religious sectarianism as the real seamless garment have been accused of obscuring the real issue with demagoguery. Last year *Commonweal* — perhaps the most important current forum for left antiabortion opinion — ran an editorial demanding that we shape up: "Those who hold that abortion is immoral believe that the biological dividing lines of birth or viability should no more

determine whether a developing member of the species is denied or accorded essential rights than should the biological dividing lines of sex or race or disability or old age. This argument is open to challenge. Perhaps the dividing lines are sufficiently different. Pro-choice advocates should state their reasons for believing so. They should meet the argument on its own grounds. . . ."

In other words, the only question we're allowed to debate — or the only one *Commonweal* is willing to entertain — is "Are fetuses the moral equivalent of born human beings?" And I can't meet the argument on its own grounds because I don't agree that this is the key question, whose answer determines whether one supports abortion or opposes it. I don't doubt that fetuses are alive, or that they're biologically human — what else could they be? I do consider the life of a fertilized egg less precious than the well-being of a woman with feelings, self-consciousness, a history, social ties; and I think fetuses get closer to being human in a moral sense as they come closer to birth. But to me these propositions are intuitively self-evident. I wouldn't know how to justify them to a "nonbeliever," nor do I see the point of trying.

I believe the debate has to start in a different place — with the recognition that fertilized eggs develop into infants inside the bodies of women. Pregnancy and birth are active processes in which a woman's body shelters, nourishes, and expels a new life; for nine months she is immersed in the most intimate possible relationship with another being. The growing fetus makes considerable demands on her physical and emotional resources, culminating in the catalysmic experience of birth. And childbearing has unpredictable consequences; it always entails some risk of injury or death.

For me all this has a new concreteness. I had a baby last year. My much-desired and relatively easy pregnancy was full of what antiabortion

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Abortion

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tionists like to call "inconveniences." I was always tired, short of breath; my digestion was never right; for three months I endured a state of hormonal siege; later I had pains in my fingers, swelling feet, numb spots on my legs, the dread hemorrhoids. I had to think about everything I ate. I developed borderline glucose intolerance. I gained 50 pounds and am still overweight; my shape has changed in other ways that may well be permanent. Psychologically, my pregnancy consumed me — though I'd happily bought the seat on the roller coaster, I was still terrified to be so out of control of my normally tractable body. It was all bearable, even interesting — even, at times transcendent — because I wanted a baby. Birth was painful, exhausting, and wonderful. If I hadn't wanted a baby it would only have been painful and exhausting — or worse. I can hardly imagine what it's like to have your body and mind taken over in this way when you not only don't look forward to the result, but positively dread it. The thought appalls me. So as I see it, the key question is "Can it be moral, under any circumstances, to make a woman bear a child against her will?"

From this vantage point, *Commonweal's* argument is irrelevant, for in a society that respects the individual, no "member of the species" in any stage of development has an "essential right" to make use of someone else's body, let alone in such all-encompassing fashion, without that person's consent. You can't make a case against abortion by applying a general principle about everybody's human rights; you have to show exactly the opposite — that the relationship between fetus and pregnant woman is an exception, one that justifies depriving women of their right to bodily integrity. And in fact all antiabortion ideology rests on the premise — acknowledged or simply assumed — that women's unique capacity to bring life into the world carries with it a unique obligation; that women cannot be allowed to "play God" and launch only the lives they welcome.

Yet the alternative to allowing women this power is to make them impotent. Criminalizing abortion doesn't just harm individual women with unwanted pregnancies, it affects all women's sense of themselves. Without control of our fertility we can never en-

vision ourselves as free, for our biology makes us constantly vulnerable. Simply because we are female our physical integrity can be violated, our lives disrupted and transformed, at any time. Our ability to act in the world is hopelessly compromised by our sexual being.

Ah, sex — it does have a way of coming up in these discussions, despite all. When pressed, right-to-lifers of whatever political persuasion invariably point out that pregnancy doesn't happen by itself. The leftists often give patronizing lectures on contraception (though some find only "natural birth control" acceptable), but remain unmoved when reminded that contraceptives fail. Openly or implicitly they argue that people shouldn't have sex unless they're prepared to procreate. (They are quick to profess a single standard — men as well as women should be sexually "responsible." Yes, and the rich as well as the poor should be allowed to sleep under bridges.) Which amounts to saying that if women want to lead heterosexual lives they must give up any claim to self-determination, and that they have no right to sexual pleasure without fear.

Opposing abortion, then, means accepting that women must suffer sexual disempowerment and a radical loss of autonomy relative to men: if fetal life is sacred, the self-denial basic to women's oppression is also basic to the moral order. Opposing abortion means embracing a conservative sexual morality, one that subordinates pleasure to reproduction: if fetal life is sacred, there is no room for the view that sexual passion — or even sexual love — for its own sake is a human need and a human right. Opposing abortion means tolerating the inevitable double standard, by which men may accept or reject restriction in accordance with their beliefs, while women must bow to them out of fear — or defy them at great risk. However much *Commonweal's* editors and those of like mind want to believe their opposition to abortion is simply saving lives, the truth is that in the real world they are shoring up a particular sexual culture, whose rules are stacked against women. I have yet to hear any left right-to-lifers take full responsibility for that fact or deal seriously with its political implications.

Unfortunately, their fuzziness has

not lessened their appeal — if anything it's done the opposite. In increasing numbers liberals and leftists while opposing antiabortion laws, have come to view abortion as an "agonizing moral issue" with some justice on both sides, rather than an issue — however emotionally complex — of freedom versus repression, or equality versus hierarchy, that affects their political self-definition. This above-the-battle stance is attractive to leftists who want to be feminist good guys but are uneasy or ambivalent about sexual issues, not to mention those who want to ally with "progressive" factions of the Catholic Church on Central America, nuclear disarmament, or populist economics without that sticky abortion question getting in the way.

Such neutrality is a way of avoiding the painful conflict over cultural issues that continually smolders on the left. It can also be a way of coping with the contradictions of personal life at a time when liberation is a dream deferred. To me the fight for abortion has always been the cutting edge of feminism, precisely because it denies that anatomy is destiny, that female biology dictates women's subordinate status. Yet recently, I've found it hard to focus on the issue, let alone summon up the militance needed to stop the antiabortion tanks. In part that has to do with second-round weariness — do we really have to go through all these things twice? — in part with my life now.

Since my daughter's birth my feelings about abortion — not as a political demand but as a personal choice — have changed. In this society, the difference between the situation of a childless woman and of a mother is immense; the fear that having a child will dislodge one's tenuous hold on a nontraditional life is excruciating. This terror of being forced into the sea-change of motherhood gave a special edge to my convictions about abortion. Since I've made that plunge voluntarily, with consequences still unfolding, the terror is gone; I might not want another child for all sorts of reasons, but I will never again feel that my identity is at stake. Different battles with the culture absorb my energy now. Besides, since I've experienced the primal, sensual passion of caring for an infant, there will always be part of me that does want another. If I had an abortion today, it would be with con-

flict and sadness unknown to me when I had an abortion a decade ago. And the antiabortionists imagery of dead babies hits me with new force. Do many women — left, feminist women — have such feelings? Is this the sort of “ambivalence about abortion” that in the present atmosphere slides so easily into self-flagellating guilt?

Some left antiabortionists, mainly pacifists — Juli Loesch, Mary Meehan, and other “feminists for life”; Jim Wallis and various writers for Wallis’ radical evangelical journal *Sojourners* — have tried to square their position with concern for women. They blame the prevalence of abortion on oppressive conditions — economic injustice, lack of child care and other social supports for mothers, the devaluation of childrearing, men’s exploitative sexual behavior and refusal to take equal responsibility for children. They disagree on whether to criminalize abortion now (since murder is intolerable no matter what the cause) or to build a long-term moral consensus (since stopping abortion requires a general social transformation), but they all regard abortion as a desperate solution to desperate problems, and the women who resort to it as more sinned against than sinning.

This analysis grasps an essential feminist truth: that in a male-supremacist society no choice a woman makes is genuinely free or entirely in her interest. Certainly many women have had abortions they didn’t want or wouldn’t have wanted if they had any plausible means of caring for a child; and countless others wouldn’t have gotten pregnant in the first place were it not for inadequate contraception, sexual confusion and guilt, male pressure, and other stigmata of female powerlessness. Yet forcing a woman to bear a child she doesn’t want can only add injury to insult, while refusing to go through with such a pregnancy can be a woman’s first step toward taking hold of her life. And many women who have abortions are “victims” only of ordinary human miscalculation, technological failure, or the vagaries of passion, all bound to exist in any society, however utopian. There will always be women who, at any given moment, want sex but don’t want a child; some of these women will get pregnant; some of them will have abortions. Behind the victim theory of abortion is the implicit belief that women are always

ready to be mothers, if only conditions are right, and that sex for pleasure rather than procreation is not only “irresponsible” (i.e. bad) but something men impose on women, never something women actively seek. Ironically, left right-to-lifers see abortion as always coerced (it’s “exploitation” and “violence against women”), yet regard motherhood — which for most women throughout history has been inescapable, and is still our most socially approved role — as a positive choice. The analogy to the feminist anti-pornography movement goes beyond borrowed rhetoric: the antiporners, too, see active female lust as surrender to male domination and traditionally feminine sexual attitudes as expressions of women’s true nature.

This Orwellian version of feminism, which glorifies “female values” and dismisses women’s struggles for freedom — particularly sexual freedom — as a male plot, has become all too familiar in recent years. But its use in the abortion debate has been especially muddleheaded. Somehow we’re supposed to leap from an oppressive patriarchal society to the egalitarian one that will supposedly make abortion obsolete without ever allowing women to see themselves as people entitled to control their reproductive function rather than be controlled by it. How women who have no power in this most personal of areas can effectively fight for power in the larger society is left to our imagination. A “New Zealand feminist” quoted by Mary Meehan in a 1980 article in *The Progressive* says, “Accepting short-term solutions like abortion only delays the implementation of real reforms like decent maternity and paternity leaves, job protection, high-quality child care, community responsibility for dependent people of all ages, and recognition of the economic contribution of childminders” — as if these causes were progressing nicely before legal abortion came along. On the contrary, the fight for reproductive freedom is the foundation of all the others, which is why antifeminists resist it so fiercely.

As “prolife” pacifists have been particularly concerned with refuting charges of misogyny, the liberal Catholics at *Commonweal* are most exercised by the claim that antiabortion laws violate religious freedom. The editorial quoted above hurled another challenge at the proabortion forces:

It is time, finally, for the pro-choice advocates and editorial writers to abandon, once and for all, the argument that abortion (sic) is a religious “doctrine” of a single or several churches being imposed on those of other persuasions in violation of the First Amendment. . . . Catholics and their bishops are accused of imposing their “doctrine” on abortion, but not their “doctrine” on the needs of the poor, or their “doctrine” on the arms race, or their “doctrine” on human rights in Central America. . . .

The briefest investigation into Catholic teaching would show that the church’s case against abortion is utterly unlike, say, its belief in the Real Presence, known with the eyes of faith alone, or its insistence on a Sunday obligation, applicable only to the faithful. The church’s moral teaching on abortion . . . is for the most part like its teaching on racism, warfare, and capital punishment, based on ordinary reasoning common to believers and nonbelievers.

This is one more example of right-to-lifers’ tendency to ignore the sexual ideology underlying their stand. Interesting isn’t it how the editorial neglects to mention that the church’s moral teaching on abortion jibes neatly with its teaching on birth control, sex, divorce, and the role of women. The traditional, patriarchal sexual morality common to these teachings is explicitly religious, and its chief defenders in modern times have been the more conservative churches. The Catholic and evangelical Christian churches are the backbone of the organized right-to-life movement and — a few Nathansons and Hentoffs notwithstanding — have provided most of the movement’s activists and spokespeople.

Furthermore, the Catholic hierarchy has made a litmus test of loyalty to the church in a way it has done with no other political issue — witness Archbishop O’Connor’s harassment of Geraldine Ferraro during her vice-presidential campaign. It’s unthinkable that a Catholic bishop would publicly excoriate a Catholic officeholder or candidate for taking a hawkish position on the arms race or Central America or capital punishment. Nor do I notice anyone trying to read William F. Buckley out of the church for his views on welfare. The fact is there is no accepted Catholic “doc-

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million in damages, has not had repairs and is near bankruptcy. The rate of illiteracy in El Salvador continues to increase and is now at 63%.

The breakdown of the educational system is indicative of the situation for other sectors of the Salvadoran society. According to ANDES, the so-called agrarian reform program has come to a halt, there is an increasing militarization of work centers and the official unemployment rate is 48%, although other private studies conclude it is closer to 60%. Inflation is running at 15% annually and in the last four years alone, the cost of living has increased by 62% while salaries in the public sector over the same period of time have increased by only 20% on the average. Approximately 50% of the Salvadoran national budget goes to the war effort while the government is facing a \$200 million deficit.

Growing Urban Movement Faces Repression

In response to these conditions and Duarte's broken promises, workers and students have begun to organize themselves at a level unheard of since 1980-81. On May Day of 1985, tens of thousands of peasants, workers, members of Christian base communities, market women and students marched through the streets of San Salvador with several strong demands such as a 100% increase in salaries, a 50% reduction in the cost of housing and a call for dialogue and negotiations to end the war.

There have been over 100 labor union strikes under Duarte since his election victory and the labor movement continues to build itself again with increasing organization, unity and militancy. In June delegates from 70 labor unions united to present a series of economic and social demands to the government.

As the Salvadoran labor movement has become stronger, so has the government repression against it. Although the number of victims are not even close to the figures of the early 1980's, a very real threat of death exists for any active critic of the government. Last May a month long occupation of 25 medical facilities by workers led to the death of 4 people after an assault on a hospital by an elite police squad. When workers at ANDA, the public water service, recently went on strike asking for wage increases, decreases in consumer water charges

and an end to corruption in management, several strikers were beaten and 75 leaders were fired. The Salvadoran military, in a newspaper ad, threatened the lives of five ANDA union leaders and warned the union not to march in the streets. The five leaders were jailed and blindfolded for five days. After their release, two of the leaders were murdered and three others fled the country.

Our delegation was asked by the ANDA workers to march with them in a demonstration to express solidarity and provide protection as they continued to strike even after their leaders had been killed. Surrounded by armed military and intimidated by death-squad cars that had machine guns coming out of all four windows, the workers angrily chanted anti-government slogans as we wound through the crowded streets of San Salvador.

During our one week stay in San Salvador, one teacher was captured by the army and imprisoned for no apparent reason, one teacher was captured and interrogated and another teacher was brutally murdered. In early July students and faculty activists at the National University were warned in a newspaper ad, paid for by the Salvadoran Anti-Communist Army, to leave the country. One of the 11 was shot and all have fled for their lives.

On one morning we went to meet with the COMADRES, the mothers of the disappeared. This group of peasant, poor and working-class women, has received international recognition for its work in the field of human rights, including the Robert Kennedy Memorial Award. (They were not, however, granted visas to come to the U.S. to receive the award.) COMADRES is one of the most consistently vocal and visible opposition groups in the country and is a perpetual thorn in the side of the government. (Many of them told us that after losing their families they had nothing else to lose so they were willing to risk their lives daily, continuing their work and organizing illegal demonstrations.)

On the morning we arrived, the mothers had just found that their offices had been ransacked during the previous night. They were sure it had been the military. Files and lists had been taken, a large amount of cash donated by a solidarity organization

had been stolen, the roof had been torn off and the phone lines had been cut. The mothers were outraged but took the event in stride while explaining to us that it was just another example of repression from the government. The women went on to give us shocking documentation of how their loved ones had been murdered, tortured, raped and imprisoned by the Salvadoran government. They said they held Duarte and the U.S. government directly responsible for the repression and they asked us to "please help unmask Duarte."

The next day when we met with acting U.S. ambassador David Passage, we brought up the break-in at the COMADRES office. Passage dismissed the group as extremists who were just trying to start trouble and he spent over an hour giving us the U.S. version of Salvadoran reality. Although admitting that America's Watch was a "reputable human rights organization," Passage refused to accept the group's documentation of the air war in El Salvador. He said that he had not heard of one civilian who had been killed in the air war. Passage also said that he could not make any promises that death squad activity in El Salvador would cease, but from his perspective, El Salvador, under Duarte, is moving gradually towards a peaceful democracy.

No Peace in Sight

But the peaceful democracy is further away than ever. The civil war continues and is more or less at a stalemate with no end in sight. According to informed sources in El Salvador, because of U.S.-supplied air power of the Salvadoran armed forces, the guerrillas of the FMLN are less visible, moving in smaller bands, ambushing army patrols, and inflicting damage to the infrastructure of the country. However, they have proved they are still capable of periodically mounting major successful military operations. The army, although claiming to inflict high casualties, is much more successful at killing and dispersing civilians than guerrillas. Unconditional U.S. support for the war effort has made the government more confident of winning a military victory and less inclined to seriously engage in negotiations. Meanwhile, in the capital, it is becoming clear that Duarte cannot satisfy the needs of his people while he serves the

interests of the U.S., the Salvadoran military and the oligarchy. As the popular movement grows and continues to take to the streets, Duarte will most likely have to spend some of his abundant political capital by trying to crush the opposition through intimidation, threats, imprisonment, and if necessary, torture and murder.

While the European parliament recently excluded the government of El Salvador from its programs of economic assistance because of "massive violations of human rights," the U.S. continues to pump in over one million dollars per day into the war-torn country. Unless a massive educational campaign concerning the situation in El Salvador takes place in the U.S. and an immense amount of pressure is put on Congress, Duarte will continue to receive a virtual blank check from the U.S. and the war and repression will undoubtedly continue.

U.S. public opinion is one of the greatest factors determining El Salvador's future and the amount of suffering that will take place there. It is up to us to influence this factor by revealing the truth about "Duarte's Democracy."

Ken Tangvik is a part-time staffperson at Resist and a faculty member at Roxbury Community College in Boston.

The Delegation to El Salvador was organized by CAPA, Committee in Support of ANDES. For more information, contact CAPA at 1151 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, MA 02139 or call (617) 876-4545.

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Abortion

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trine" on these matters comparable to the church's absolutist condemnation of abortion. While differing attitudes toward war, racism, and poverty cut across religious and secular lines, the sexual values that mandate opposition to abortion are the bedrock of the traditional religious world view, and the source of the most bitter conflict with secular and religious modernists. When churches devote their considerable political power, organizational resources, and money to translating those values into law, I call that imposing their religious beliefs on me — whether or not they're technically violating the First Amendment.

Statistical studies have repeatedly

shown that people's views on abortion are best predicted by their opinions on sex and "family" issues not on "life" issues like nuclear weapons or the death penalty. That's not because we're inconsistent but because we comprehend what's really at stake in the abortion fight. It's the antiabortion left that refuses to face the contradiction in its own position: you can't be wholeheartedly for "life" — or for such progressive aspirations as freedom, democracy, equality — and condone the subjugation of women. The seamless garment is full of holes.

This article was reprinted from the Village Voice of July 16, 1985.

Our political culture is often the inspiration that enables us to continue with the day to day work of organizing, lobbying and fighting for our rights and freedom. Here are a few groups whose cultural work is particularly inspirational food for the struggle.

Bread and Puppet Theater, RFD #2, Glover, VT 05389.

The arts are political, whether they like it or not. If they stay in their own realm, preoccupied with their proper problems, the arts support the status quo, which in itself is highly political. Or they scream and kick and participate in our century's struggle for liberation in whatever haphazard way they can . . .

from Bread and Puppet: Stories of Struggle & Faith from Central America

The Bread and Puppet Theater was founded 20 years ago in New York's Lower East Side. Beginning with experiments in a loft space, the early shows, the themes of which ranged from fairy-tales to daily news, moved into the streets and churches of the city. The Theater expressed its concern for contemporary social issues by creating rent-strike and voter registration parades. During the sixties the group participated frequently in demonstrations against the war in Vietnam, using over-life-sized puppets and masked performers in parades, vigils, and street shows. In 1970 Bread and Puppet Theater moved to Vermont. Since 1974 it has made its home in Glover in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. Most of the puppet construction takes place in the summer with volunteers from all walks of life joining in Bread and Puppet's major yearly production: "Our Domestic Resurrection Circus." This is a two-day outdoor festival celebrating the beauties and lamenting the sorrows of our existence in scores of mask, music and puppet performances. In its 10th year, this year's Circus focused on Nicaragua and the U.S.'s immediate responsibility for that country's troubles. Over 20,000 people from all over the U.S., as well as Europe, Asia and Latin America, attended the event which included another 200 local people involved in

preparation and performance of the theater pieces. Bread and Puppet is mostly funded by donations and by their annual tours which this year took them throughout the U.S. and to Spain, Columbia and Nicaragua. Resist's grant of \$500 helped with this year's Circus.

La Peña, 3105 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94705.

La Peña has, from the start, been a political place in the broadest sense of the word. We've been redefining what political culture means.

In June 1975, not long after the disclosure of formerly classified documents brought our attention to the role of the CIA in the 1973 coup that replaced Salvador Allende, a small group of Chilean exiles and North and Latin Americans opened a tiny community center in Berkeley called La Peña Cultural Center. Modeled after similar centers in Argentina and Chile, La Peña's beginnings were modest considering that their intention was to provide a community center where people could gather together, enjoy each other's cultures, exchange information and work together to create a world where cultural and political differences wouldn't so savagely divide us from each other. Since La Peña was founded it has served as exactly this type of gathering place. During the past ten years, La Peña has played an important role in supporting community and solidarity organizations by providing space for benefits and meetings as well as many kinds of technical assistance, and in helping to make known the work of many local progressive artists and musicians. An average week at La Peña might include events as diverse as a workshop on women in cultural resistance; a Central America update; a speaker on the struggle in Lebanon; a benefit evening with the American Indian Movement; a film showing of "America — from Hitler to MX"; a discussion on women in Ireland; and a benefit dance for the gay and lesbian community. Resist is proud that we were able to provide La Peña with a \$500 grant which helped them celebrate their 10th anniversary.

Vietnam Veteran Artists, PO Box 1248, Boston, MA 02205.

Orange was never a strange rainfall./ Orange was just a crayon color,/ a fruit that grows upon a tree./ Not an agent deforming our children,/ and the children you should see./ but, no one likes reminders./ No one likes reminders./ No, no one likes — likes reminders.

from "Saigon Children"

Resist first heard of Vietnam Vet Artists (VVA) in 1983 when we received a grant proposal from them. Then in May of that year a poem "Forget Nam" by David Connelly, a member of VVA, appeared on the front page of *Resist*. Later that year we invited VVA to read poetry and give a slide presentation at Resist's 16th anniversary party. It was this slide presentation that many of us remember most clearly from that party. The lights went out and the song "Saigon Children" filled the room. And then the slides — remnants of VVA members experiences in Vietnam began. There weren't many dry eyes in the room at the end of the show and many of us left with an increased sense of determination to keep another "Vietnam" from ever happening. Since 1983 VVA has been working on several projects including their slide show; a production of a poetry tape; development, in conjunction with 35 educators, of a curriculum that will address the impact of the Vietnam War; a 45 LP which includes the songs "58,000+" and "Saigon Children"; and "After the Firefight," an exhibit of photographs and poems. Vietnam Vet Artists is concerned with the way the history of the Vietnam War is being forgotten and rewritten. They've made it their responsibility to tell the true story so the lessons of Vietnam will be remembered. Resist's grant of \$280 supported the production of the poetry tape. For more information on their work or to purchase records and tapes, contact VVA at the above address.

